

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 DEAE-00 JUSE-00 SNM-02 SY-04 TRSE-00 OES-03

OMB-01 AID-05 AGR-05 HEW-02 /087 W

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R 180145Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3526

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR HK

SUBJECT: HONG KONG QUARTERLY NARCOTICS SITREP (FOURTH QUARTER)

BEGIN SUMMARY:

1. PRIMARY INTEREST IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD IN HONG KONG THIS QUARTER HAS CENTERED ON THE NEAR RECORD SEIZURES OBTAINED BY THE NARCOTICS BUREAU AND ON THE CONSEQUENT DISRUPTION OF THE PREVAILING NARCOTICS SYNDICATE SUPPLY PATTERNS IN THE COLONY.

2. SUCCESS IN BREAKING UP THE SYNDICATES PROVIDES A NEW SET OF PROBLEMS. THE NARCOTICS BUREAU PREDICTS A SWITCH IN 1975 TRAFFICKING FROM LARGE-SCALE SHIPMENTS TO A PROLIFERATION OF SMALL-TIME TRAFFICKERS BRINGING IN SMALLER AMOUNTS OF NARCOTICS PER TRIP. THE SWITCH WOULD BRING MORE DIFFICULTIES IN 1975 FOR ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

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3. AS ONE RESULT OF THE OCTOBER 1974 INTERPOL CONFERENCE IN PARIS,

A NARCOTICS BUREAU DETECTIVE IS SOON TO BE ATTACHED TO INTERPOL HEADQUARTERS. ADDITIONALLY, RECENT PRESS REPORTS SUGGEST THE INVOLVEMENT OF HONG KONG AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM UNDER A UNITED NATIONS' REGIONAL ADVISOR TO BE APPOINTED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION LATER IN THE YEAR.

4. ON THE TREATMENT SIDE, THE RECENT DISRUPTION OF SOURCES OF SUPPLY RESULTED IN HUNDREDS OF ADDICTS RESORTING TO EMERGENCY METHADONE TREATMENT CENTERS OPENED BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT. TREATMENT CENTERS REPORTED AN INCREASE OF ADDICTS UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE SEEKING TREATMENT. DR. ROBERT NEWMAN, VISITING METHADONE EXPERT, WILL COMPLETE HIS EVALUATION OF FUTURE METHADONE TREATMENT PROGRAMS BY LATE FEBRUARY. HONG KONG ALSO EXPECTS TO BECOME A MAJOR CENTER IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC FOR TRAINING OF REHABILITATION PERSONNEL FROM UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. END SUMMARY

1. ABUSE AND PRICES: A SPOKESMAN FOR HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S ACAN (ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS) AND SOCIAL WORKERS WERE UNITED IN REPORTING A SHIFT IN ABUSE PATTERNS TOWARDS AN INCREASINGLY YOUNGER AGE BRACKET. DRUG TREATMENT CENTER STATISTICS INDICATE INCREASING NUMBERS OF NARCOTICS USERS UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE. TEN YEARS AGO THERE WERE LITTLE OR NO REPORTED USERS UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE UNDER TREATMENT, WHILE ALMOST ALL TREATED ADDICTS WERE OVER 45-YEAR-OLD MALES. BY 1973, THE PERCENTAGE OF ADDICTS UNDER TREATMENT UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE WAS 30 PERCENT. THE ACAN SPOKESMAN ALSO REPORTED THAT TREATMENT CENTERS FIND YOUNGER PEOPLE MORE DIFFICULT TO CURE.

2. PRICES AS OF JANUARY 1, 1975 WERE AS FOLLOWS: OPIUM (RAW) US\$660.00/KILO; MORPHINE US\$8,956.00/KILO; HEROIN #3 (INCLUDING ADDITIVES WITH AVERAGE HEROIN CONTENT OF 22 PERCENT) US\$5,143.00/KILO; HEROIN #4 PRICE NOT AVAILABLE. THESE FIGURES REPRESENT ABOUT A 100 PERCENT INCREASE FROM LAST QUARTER.

3. PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING: (SEE PARA 5 UNDER ENFORCEMENT)

4. TRAFFICKING TRENDS: ACCORDING TO NARCOTICS BUREAU (NB) REPORTS, A CRACKDOWN IN MID-1973 BY THE THAI GOVERNMENT ON LARGE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SCALE DRUG CONSIGNMENTS TO THE COAST INITIATED A PERIOD OF DECREASING BULK SHIPMENT TO HONG KONG VIA THAI FISHING TRAWLERS -- THE NORMAL TRAFFICKING ROUTE. STOCKPILES IN HONG KONG BEGAN TO BE EXHAUSTED BY NOVEMBER 1973, THE SHORTAGE CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF DISTRUST AND INCREASING VIOLENCE AMONG RIVAL HONG KONG SYNDICATES. BY EARLY 1974 RIVAL SYNDICATE STEALING OF CONSIGNMENTS BECAME FREQUENT. SYNDICATE PERSONALITIES BECAME AMENABLE TO PASSING ON INFORMATION ON RIVALS TO GAIN ADVANTAGES FOR

THEMSELVES. THIS FACILITATED INFORMATION GATHERING BY THE NB AND RESULTED IN THE SPECTACULAR SEIZURES (SEE PARA 5). AS PRESSURE IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE AGAINST THE SYNDICATES, THE NB PREDICTS A SHIFT TO SMALL-TIME TRAFFICKERS CARRYING ONLY A FEW POUNDS PER TRIP. SINCE SYNDICATE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN SEVERELY DISRUPTED IN THE RECENT RAIDS, THE PREVENTIVE SERVICE (CUSTOMS) AT KAI TAK AIRPORT EXPECTS TO SEE AN INCREASE OF SMALL SEIZURES DURING 1975.

5. ENFORCEMENT: SEIZURES FOR THE YEAR ARE IN NEAR-RECORD FIGURES: OPIUM 10,399 LBS. AND HEROIN #3 574 LBS. (AVERAGING 36 PERCENT PURITY). MORPHINE SEIZED TOTALED 628 LBS., BRINGING THE RETAIL MARKET VALUE OF THE NARCOTICS TO OVER HK\$125 MILLION (US\$25 MILLION). SEVEN HEROIN REFINERIES WERE NEUTRALIZED, EACH WITH A PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF ABOUT 100 LBS. OF HEROIN EVERY THREE DAYS. TWO ILLICIT ACETIC ANHYDRIDE MANUFACTURING PLANTS WERE ALSO DISCOVERED -- A WORLD FIRST. THIRTY-ONE PERSONS OF VARYING DEGREES OF IMPORTANCE WITHIN SNYDICATE STRUCTURES WERE EITHER ARRESTED OR CHARGED. BOTH THE SEIZURES AND THE ARRESTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SEVERE DISRUPTION OF SNYDICATE OPERATIONS IN THE COLONY.

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6. INCOME SUBSTITUTION: N/A

7. TREATMENT/REHABILITATION/EDUCATION: THE MOST NOTABLE DEVELOPMENT ON THE TREATMENT SIDE DURING THE QUARTER WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE RECORD SEIZURES WHICH CAUSED A PRICE SPIRAL AND SHORTAGES OF NARCOTICS ON THE STREET LEVEL, ESPECIALLY IN MID-DECEMBER. ADICTS, WHO FOUND THEMSELVES WITH NO SOURCE OF SUPPLY, TURNED TO ONE OF THE THREE EMERGENCY METHADONE TREATMENT CENTERS OPENED BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT. PRESS CRITICISM OF MISHANDLING AND SLOWNESS OF RESPONSE TO THE ADDICTS' SITUATION WAS EXPLAINED IN TERMS OF THE PRELIMINARY MEDICAL CHECKS NEEDED BEFORE METHADONE COULD BE ADMINISTERED TO THE PRESUMED ADDICT. THE NUMBER OF ADDICTS BEING TREATED BY THESE CENTERS WERE SEVERAL HUNDRED, THE PEAK COMING IN MID-DECEMBER WITH A GRADUAL DECREASE IN THE FOLLOWING WEEKS.

8. THE SECOND PHASE OF ACAN'S "KEEP HONG KONG DRUG FREE" CAMPAIGN GOT UNDERWAY IN LATE DECEMBER, BUT WITH LESS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FUNDS THAN HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN REQUESTED FROM THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT (HK\$200,000 RATHER THAN HK\$800,000). ACAN CONTINUES TO STRESS THE NEED FOR PREVENTIVE RATHER THAN EXCLUSIVELY REMEDIAL ACTION WITH RESPECT TO NARCOTICS EDUCATION.

9. TRAINING: HONG KONG'S NARCOTICS BUREAU WILL INITIATE A SERIES OF INSTRUCTION COURSES FOR NARCOTICS OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE FAR EAST REGION. THE FIRST COURSE WILL BE HELD IN EARLY 1975 AND WILL BE ATTENDED BY 12 NARCOTICS OFFICERS FROM THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES. THE IDEA FOR THE COURSES WAS SUGGESTED AT THE BANGKOK COLOMBO PLAN CONFERENCE IN JULY AND HONG KONG WAS SELECTED BECAUSE OF THE COLONY'S EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH DRUG TRAFFICKING.

10. RECENT PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT WHO IS PLANNING TO DRAW UP A COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION, INCLUDING HONG KONG. A WORKING GROUP IS TO BE SET UP IN A FEW MONTHS TO DRAW UP THE PROGRAM AFTER A UN PERMANENT ADVISOR HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE REGION. THE UN ADVISOR'S JOB WILL BE TO LIAISE WITH DIFFERENT COUNTRIES OF THE REGION ACROSS A WHOLE SPECTRUM OF DRUG RELATED ISSUES.

11. REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION: (SEE ALSO PARA 10 ABOVE) MORE ARRESTS IN EUROPE OF ASIAN TRAFFICKERS HAS BEEN REPORTED. THE NB WILL SOON STATION A DETECTIVE AT INTERPOL HQ'S. IN PARIS TO ACT AS A CLERING HOUSE ON INFORMATION ON THE

ASIA TO EUROPE DRUG CHAIN. HE WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE TO CARRY OUT INVESTIGATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE IF NEEDED.

12. CONGEN AND HOST GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES: THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM OF EXPANSION OF THE METHADONE TREATMENT CENTERS IN THE COLONY IS UNDER FINAL REVIEW BY DR. ROBERT NEWMAN OF NEW YORK'S METHADONE MAINTENANCE PROJECT. HIS RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE READY BY THE END OF FEBRUARY. THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HOPES TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE MISTAKES AND FLAWS OF OTHER SIMILAR PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE, AND WILL RELY ON DR. NEWMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

13. THE CONGEN ALSO HOSTED THE VISITS OF CONGRESSMAN LESTER WOLFF, HERBERT BURKE AND MORGAN MURPHY. MR. WOLFF'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"WARM PRAISE" OF HONG KONG COMMISSIONER OF NARCOTICS NORMAN ROLPH'S FAVORABLE PERFORMANCE WAS COMMENTED ON BY THE PRESS. ALSO REPORTED WAS THE COOPERATION BETWEEN AMERICAN AND LOCAL NARCOTICS AGENTS. MR. WOLFF COMMENTED ON THE CURTAILMENT OF DRUG TRAFFIC FROM THAILAND TO THE U.S., PARTICULARLY THE PART OF THE TRAFFIC PREVIOUSLY TRANS-SHIPED THROUGH HONG KONG. THE CONGRESSMAN'S VISIT THROUGH THE AREA WAS BEING REVOKED BY CBS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE VIEWING ON THE U.S. NETWORK T.V. PROGRAM 60 MINUTES.
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